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NEWS RELEASE

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Paul J. McNulty, United States Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, and Peter D. Keisler, Assistant Attorney General, Civil Division, U.S. Department of Justice, announced that physician Laurence L. Cockerille, Jr., pleaded guilty today to charges relating to the illegal sale of controlled substances and other prescription drugs over the Internet to consumers through various websites. Cockerille pleaded guilty to conspiring to unlawfully distribute and dispense Schedule III and IV controlled substances other than for a legitimate medical purpose and not in the usual course of professional practice. He faces 5 years imprisonment.

Cockerille pleaded guilty to the lead conspiracy count in a 108-count indictment returned by a grand jury in this District against Vincent K. Chhabra, Cockerille, eight other individuals, and three companies. In return for Cockerille's guilty plea, the United States moved to dismiss the other counts against him. The indictment alleges that Chhabra and his co-conspirators used an "online ordering process" to allow customers to order controlled substances and other prescription drugs over the Internet, through such websites as "www.get-it-on.com." When customers ordered drugs online, the indictment charges, the customers chose the type, quantity, and dose of controlled substances they wanted, and answered some questions on an order form. However, no one checked the accuracy of the information that customers provided, as the Controlled Substances Act requires; and customers obtained the drugs without ever meeting a doctor face-to-face, as required by law. At the plea hearing, Cockerille told the Court that he knew during the conspiracy that what he was doing was against the law.

This case is being investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Food and Drug Administration's Office of Criminal Investigations, and the Drug Enforcement Administration. Assistant United States Attorneys James P. Gillis and Karen L. Taylor, and Department of Justice, Office of Consumer Litigation, Attorneys Linda I. Marks and Jill P. Furman.

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